

PARISH PAPERS
OF
ST. MARY'S PLATT

50p.

PREFACE

In the early Nineteenth Century, much of the land in and around Platt was owned by the Austin family (see map of 1840) and it appears that Colonel Austin contributed £400 and offered a site for the Church. This offer was declined, and 3 acres of land for the Church and Parsonage were accepted from William Lambard, as being more suitable.

HOW PLATT PARTED FROM WROTHAM

From the diaries of the Rev. John Mickleburgh, first Vicar of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Platt, by the late Rev. Canon R.V. Bristow (1965). In 1845 the Rector of Wrotham died, after 40 years in the parish. His name was GEORGE MOORE, but I do not expect Wrotham people today have ever heard of him, unless perchance they may have read the memorial inscriptions on the chancel walls of their church. Wrotham had at least one very good cause for remembering George Moore; he found an unwieldy parish which included Plaxtol, Platt, Stansted and Woodlands, as well as Wrotham proper. During his incumbency Plaxtol was made a separate parish (1821) and when he died plans were already well advanced for separating from Wrotham both Platt and Stansted. He left behind a much more manageable parish for size than he found, to the obvious benefit of Wrotham, church, parish priest and people alike. Plaxtol and Stansted already possessed churches of their own, but until 1843 Platt people had to make their way, as best they could, to Wrotham Church to offer their Sunday worship to Almighty God. In that year, two years before his death, George Moore raised the funds to build in Platt a church of its own (1843 on its weather vane) and appointed a curate-in-charge, apparently paying him out of his own pocket.

His name was GEORGE MICKLEBURGH, a married man, 39 years of age, with 5 young children. Doubtless the Rector encouraged his Curage to anticipate appointment in due course as the first Vicar of the new Parish of St. Mary Platt. We can well imagine John Mickleburgh's anxiety on that score when George Moore died - would the powers-that-be remember the curate-in-charge now? In his anxiety he sought the advice of his church warden, Capt. Randolph of Great Comp, as to the propriety of a little "wire-pulling". Not having been dissuaded, John Mickleburgh set off by Holland's coach for London (5/- fare) and among the influential people on whom he called were: a young politician named Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Church Commissioners, without apparently finding very much co-operation. Finally, he called on the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, who received him kindly but refused to commit himself to a definite promise. As the coach trundled its way back to Wrotham, John Mickleburgh could not have been very

optimistic about the outcome of his "wire-pulling", but two days later there was a complete transformation in the Mickleburgh household. Let Father John paint the picture in his own words: "Oh! joyful news. I received a most kind letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury, appointing me Incumbent of St. Mary's Church Platt with £400 a year. Ran with the news to my dear wife, we were both overwhelmed with joy. Walk to Great Comp to tell my churchwarden and write 14 letters to our friends. The children ride to Wrotham Rectory with the news. Very kind congratulatory note from the late Rector's family." A month later the Archbishop licensed the new Vicar, not as now at a service of institution and Induction in church, but at a private function in Lambeth Palace. The legal fee and other charges which John Mickleburgh had to meet in return for this licence amounted to £25 8. 4. (Fee for licence £15 2. 6., First Fruits £8 10. 6., tenths 15/4.) The following Sunday the new vicar completed all the formalities of his appointment at a long service in Platt Church, when as we still say and do, he "read himself in" by reciting the 39 Articles of Religion in their entirety, signing a document assenting to them and having it countersigned by the two churchwardens, Capt. Randolph and Mr. Ben Watson. Thus was Platt Church finally separated from Wrotham Church, and the good work initiated by George Moore reached its full fruition, and John Mickleburgh gave token evidence of his joy and gratitude by giving ten shillings (!) to the postman who brought the letter with the good tidings from Lambeth Palace, by drinking the Archbishop's health on his birthday, and by purchasing his portrait for 7/6!

Not everyone in Wrotham, however, was quite so sure that their late rector George Moore had indeed initiated a "good" work, and not every- one shared the first vicar of Platt's great joy at its completion. The new parish meant the drawing of new boundary lines across many acres of land which for centuries had been considered Wrotham's very own, the new benefice meant that some of the tithe on Wrotham farmers' produce, which for centuries had been paid to their very own parson at Wrotham Rectory, would in future find its way into the pocket of the "interloping" parson at the new church of St. Mary Platt. On Easter Monday morning 1846, John Mickleburgh attended the very first Easter Vestry meeting of his new parish, and he noted with pride and satisfaction "all pleasant and unanimous". What a contrast was the atmosphere at the Wrotham

Easter Vestry meeting on Easter Monday afternoon. "Much angry feeling at the division of the parishes" was his impression, so much disunity and ill will in fact that the meeting had to be adjourned for a fortnight to allow the sending of a "memorial" on the subject to the Church Commissioners. At the adjourned meeting the atmosphere was even more stormy. John Mickleburgh in his diary: "Very angry feeling and coarse language". Think of it, 135 (1846) years ago, new-fangled Platt was the cause of staid, centuries-old Wrotham getting blasphemously and vulgarly hot-under-the-collar. What a terribly revolutionary idea the division of an ancient parish must have appeared to some of the parishioners, and yet Wrotham takes it now for granted and obviously desirable. The passage of time changes man's perspective and softens his emotions in all sorts of ways, thank God.

Now, the first vicar of Platt kept a diary and the 9th vicar of Platt has had access to it. John Mickleburgh took himself and his new appointment so seriously when he made his daily jottings that it is relatively easy for anyone reading his diary to form a pretty clear picture of him laying the foundations of a new parish. There were two services every Sunday and celebration of The Sacrament once a month, the only occasion for a collection. Reading between the lines of the vicar's diary it is fair to assume that he was conscious of two grievances of his congregation; that the church was cold and the parson could not be heard. And he was disappointed with the singing at the church services; to remedy this, he engaged Ashdown, the village blacksmith, to lead the congregation at 2/6 a Sunday - that must have been the beginning of Platt Church choir!

Apart from the Parish School, which until 1847 seems to have been limited to a Sunday School of some sort, there were no parochial organisations, but John Mickleburgh certainly started a good tradition of visiting the sick and poor; such visits seem to have been as much concerned with dispensing coal, food, clothing and medicine, as with the more priestly duties of praying with, and administering Holy Communion to the very ill and dying and baptising the many babies who, in those days, had very little hope of survival. The late Rector of Wrotham had bequeathed to the poor of his parish a sum of money, of which £25 was passed on to John Mickleburgh for distribution in "Wrotham Heath, Platt, Basted, Crouch and Claygate Cross".

When George Moore's family vacated Wrotham Rectory, they passed on to this new vicar for similar distribution, 1 cwt. rice; 2 tons coal, and money for the clothing club. But even in those far off days there were parishioners who just could not abide parsons; sometimes he had to record that the door of one of his flock was deliberately locked against him. On another occasion he was called upon to quell a riot among gipsies encamped at Ranter's Hall, Platt Common.

A new parish brings additional responsibilities for a vicar, and as a general rule, John Mickleburgh was fortunate enough to have a church ready to hand, but he had no vicarage and no schools. As far as I can make out, the Mickleburgh family rented from Colonel Austen a house at Borough Green, and to get to his parish and church, often several times a day, the vicar had either to walk or saddle May Fly, the bay pony which George Moore's daughter gave him when they left Wrotham, or of turning out the family gig. It is to the credit of John Mickleburgh that he elected to build the Parish School before studying his own comfort and convenience. By a generous gift from the family of George Moore of £150 plans for the new school were soon well ahead and grants promised by the National Society, the new school which is now called the Old School was completed and opened on November 30th, 1846, with an attendance of 50 children. Mr. Crittle of Ightham Common was appointed the first headmaster; the vicar recorded that Mr. Crittle would not take the post "under 10/- per week and the children's pence". The week before the opening of the new school was spent by the headmaster-to-be at the Westminster Teachers' Training School at the request and expense of the Vicar. And that was how modern education started in Platt!

(From an address to the Wrotham Sisterhood 1965)
(with grateful acknowledgement to Mrs.R.Bristow)

THE CHURCH of ST. MARY THE VIRGIN - PLATT

1840

(Extract from the Civil Engineer & Architect's Journal 1841.)

"The ceremony of laying the first stone of a new Church at Platt, in the Parish of Wrotham, was performed on the 8th (month not given) in the presence of a large concourse of spectators, by the daughter of the Rector of Wrotham, the Rev. George Moore. The Architects are Messrs. Whichcord and Walker of Maidstone. The Church about to be erected is on a site, the gift of W. Lambard Esq., being part of three acres of land which it is contemplated to lay out in a picturesque and advantageous manner, in building a Parsonage House, School-rooms and Almshouses. The Church will be built of Kentish rag-stone in the early pointed style, and is cruciform in plan, with an octangular turret at the N.E. angle, in which is a stone staircase leading to the various floors and roof of the Tower. The Organ gallery (the only one in the Church) is situated in the Tower and is lighted by a large three-light window in the Western wall. The Chancel has a corresponding East window under which there is a series of small pointed arches, and on either side a niche to serve as a seat for the officiating Minister. The Church will contain sittings for 500 persons, 120 in pews, 210 free seats, and 170 for children. The pews are placed in the transepts, the free seats in the Nave, and the children's on raised seats at the West end of the Nave and in the Organ gallery. The Pulpit and Reader's desk are placed at the S.E. angle of the intersection of the Nave and Transepts. The total cost of the Church will not exceed £2,500."

Extracts from the Specification, dated 1840:

"The foundations to be built by the end of November 1841 and the whole of the works to be completely finished on or before 15th September 1842. The Contractor to be at the expense of covering up the Foundations for the Winter with straw and loam." Detailed directions are given for Excavation, Brick-layer and Kentish Mason, York and Bath Mason, Plasterer, Carpenter, Joiner and Ironmongery,

Plumber, Glazier and Painter; and a schedule at which "Extras and Deductions" are to be valued:

Viz.	£.	s.	d.
Digging at per yard cube			6
Ragstone rough Foundation as per rod of 272 ft.	4	5	0
Ragstone walling as described	5	5	0
Brickwork, all stocks in Mortar	14	0	0
Brickwork, in cement	18	0	0
Sunk & tooled work at per ft.super		1	6
Moulded work at per ft. super		2	3
Cube Fir rough & framed in roofs at per ft. cube		4	6
Cube Oak joints & plates at per ft. cube		5	6
Cube inch yellow Floor at per sq.ft.	2	10	0
Outside Pew framing without elbow per ft. sq.		1	9

Also, detailed directions for painting of iron straps, saddle bars, Hoppers and pipes, etc., all with four coats of paint. The outside of all doors and frames to be knotted, primed and painted 4 coats. Pulpit, Reading Desk and Clerk's Desk, two outside doors and Altar-railing, painted 4 coats grained oak and varnished twice with best Copal etc. A wind vane of copper, gilt, with spindle, letters etc. complete to be placed on top of the Turret. A fireplace to be built very carefully in brickwork and properly parquettted in the Vestry".

Signed: Whichcord & Walker - Maidstone.
John Whichcord 1790-1860

RATES & TAXES 1845 – 1847

Licence to Perpetual Curacy of St. Mary Platt	£15	2	6
Tenths due at Christmas (1845)		15	4
First fruits of Living of St. Mary's Church Platt	£8	10	6

Highway rate at 10d in £1 assessed at	£75	0	0
Half Year's Property Tax		8	7
Poor Rates on Tithe & House	£19	7	0
Property Tax		8	7
Church Rate		12	0
1848 Highway Rate (Nepicar)	£3	2	6
Highway Rate on Tithe	£12	10	0
Tax on house and land		10	0

(Extracts from John Mickleburgh's Expenses A/C)

I am indebted to Mrs. Ruth Bristow for permission to quote extracts from the Diary of the first vicar of St. Mary Platt, edited by the late Reverend Canon R.V. Bristow.

(J.V.C.T.)

The Consecration of Platt Church took place in 1842, but it was some years afterwards that an organ was provided, and lamps in the Sanctuary were introduced. Later an Altar Cross was presented by a Miss H. Batt, as were offering bags and an Altar frontal in memory of her family. Much still needed to be accomplished and doubtless "there is no money" was to be heard, even in 1842 when the Consecration took place.

At the Church's Jubilee, altar railings were presented by the Reverend T. Frampton. Stained glass windows in the South Transept were given by Mr. & Mrs. John Terry of The Grange. Coloured glass windows in the Nave by Mrs. Phillip's "Working Party", and the three windows at the East End were the gift of the Gregory family in memory of the late Vicar and his son and daughter. An Alms Basin was given by Miss West of Mill House. In March 1900 the cost of renovating the Church clock was partly met by offertories, and proceeds of a concert produced £3 11 8., only half of the sum required. A new vane on the Tower costing £1 was erected to celebrate the Relief of Ladysmith. The organ was cleaned and tuned in April 1899 at a cost of £7 10 0. In May 1900 Miss Batt paid for the renovation of the Cross and Candlesticks on the Altar.

PLATT VICARAGE

(from the Diaries of John Mickleburgh, edited by the late Reverend Canon R.V. Bristow)

Now the first Vicar of Platt, John Mickleburgh, felt free to get busy with the building of a Vicarage on his glebe land next to the Church. First he visited a good many vicarages in the neighbourhood to get ideas, then he drew tentative plans of his own, incorporating those ideas. Then he put the project and his ideas into the hands of a Maidstone architect, Mr. Whichcord. After a mortgage had been arranged with Queen Anne's Bounty, came the great day; May 1st 1848, "a very bright day, with rather cold N.E. wind, after frost in the morning". At 1 pm the Vicar met the architect "to open tenders for building The Parsonage Home, we select Shadgetts".

Work started almost immediately, and from then on for the Mickleburgh family it was a case of daily and sometimes twice daily visits to the site to note the progress on what was to be their home. The Vicar was not always satisfied with the workmanship, and surely that must have been an unforgettable moment for the foreman and his bricklayers when the Reverend gentleman gave them a practical demonstration of how Kentish ragstones should be laid. Then there was the occasion when he arrived to find there was no-one at work, and traced all the workmen to the Blue Anchor, and still another occasion when Shadgett, the builder, sacked his foreman out of hand. Stage by stage, however, the house grew, and stage by stage John and Fanny admired it, and doubtless dreamed dreams and made plans for its occupation. By the middle of January 1849, the attics were completed, and the drive and terraces made, and the hedges planted, when the diary ends abruptly with this entry: "Dull day with fine rain and much wind. Stove burns in Church brilliantly, Church quite warm, morning and afternoon sermons. Two christenings. Very fatigued with duty. Partake of Sacrament with Revd. A. Douglas (Rector of Ightham) at a dying man's....and...." Thus this diary ends with that "and". What can have happened that Sunday evening, after such a busy day, that reduced John Mickleburgh so suddenly to silence?

There is no evidence that the Mickleburgh family ever moved into the new vicarage on which they had expended so much attention, so much hope, and so much of their own money on the lay-out of the grounds. Was the effort he made on Sunday 21st January 1849, culminating with the Holy Communion for a dying man, the last effort of which he was capable? There is a memorial on the North wall of the Sanctuary of Platt Church which indicates that he died six months later. The inscription reads: "John Mickleburgh, Incumbent of this Parish, died July 12th, 1849 aged 41 years. This tablet is erected by his deeply bereaved wife and children."

(R.V.B.)

N.B. So, since they never took up residence in Platt Vicarage, where did they live after leaving Wrotham? It has been suggested perhaps in the house now occupied by Mr. Morrison, the dentist.

Extracts from the Diaries of the Rev. John Mickleburgh.
 ("Saturday April 25th 1846, examined site for PLATT VICARAGE").

WAGES FOR LABOUR ON GARDEN & SURROUNDINGS

1848		£	s	d
Nov 18	Jessup, 6 days)			
	Smith, 2 ½ days)			
	Hayes, 7 ½ days) levelling terrace	1	12	6
Nov 25	Eight men, 5 ½ days raising terrace			
	& trenching kitchen garden	4	7	0
	Boy Tanner, breaking cords of stone			
	for drive		2	0
Dec 2	Jessup, Corsten, Sparkes 5 ¾ days	1	13	6
	Boy Tanner, breaking 10 cords of stone		8	4
Dec 9	Jessup, Sparkes, Corsten 4 ½ days each	1	5	6
	Boy Tanner, breaking 6 cords of stone		5	0
	Three boys (several days) picking stones		2	6
Dec 16	Corsten, Jessup, Sparkes 4 ¾ days			
	levelling and forming terrace.	1	8	6
	Boy Tanner, breaking stones		5	6
	Smith 4 days forming fence and bank		6	6

Dec 23	8 men, 6 days levelling and forming terrace etc.	4	16	0
Dec 30	4 men, 4 ½ days work on terrace	1	16	0
	Boy Tanner, breaking cords of stone & 2 ½ days work		5	0
1849		£	s	d
Jan 6	Workmen on road & terrace)	2	10	0
13	ditto) four men	1	5	6
20	")	2	16	0
27	")	2	6	0
Feb 3	2 men, 1 week's wage on road & terrace.	1	4	0
	Total	£28	15	4

WAGES 1856 – 1849

Expenses for his wife Fanny, self, and 5 children and staff. Mary Jane Bartur referred to as Jane, evidently a trusted friend and housekeeper, whose wages were paid quarterly at £2. 10 0. plus £1 for housekeeping. A succession of maids @ 6d per week, rising to £9 per annum. George, @ a weekly wage from 1/6 to 3/6. He was succeeded by Charles @ 3/6 per week.

Mr. Crittle £1 in advance on his marriage.

Williams (gardener) 8 days' work 14/6.

Smith fencing glebe (Vicarage land) 12/8, also for tying hurdles <52/6 per 100 = 15/8.

Harper, 2 days' gardening 4/-.

Tibbetts, one day's pruning etc 2/6.

Sweep for kitchen chimney 1/6, sweep boy 2d.

Waghorn for killing a pig and "cutting it up" 1/6.

Styles for supper of 14 workmen £2. 2. 0.

Three bell-ringers ("ringing well") 8d.

Mr. Kent for attending Fanny's confinement £ 4 4 0 .

Surgeon's fees £ 4 2 6 .

Mrs. Miles, monthly nurse, 2 months £2 0. 0. plus travelling expenses.

Mrs. Wells - 5 days cleaning house 7/6.

Mrs. Wells - 1 day cleaning school house 1/-.

Mrs. Corsten for washing surplice 1/-.

Ashdowne for singing in Church 2/-, 2/6.

SUNDRIES

Silk dress for Fanny £ 3 8 6 . Ribbon and Bonnet 6/6, umbrella 5/-.
 Fanny's stays 19/6. Blue muslin dress for Fanny 16/6. Scarf for
 Fanny £1 15. 6 + cap 4/6, gloves 1/6.
 Cotton dress for nurse 5/-
 Norton for turning coat & waistcoat 17/1.
 Collar 1/-, neckerchief 1/6, 2 prs. gloves 7/-, 1 pr. thin boots 12/6
 (self).
 Flannel for vests 1% yds - 3/4%.
 Mrs. Tanner for making 1 night shirt 1/6.
 Stuff for Julia's habit 4/8, cotton for drawers 4/8. Viner for school
 thimbles 1/-. Viner for Clothing Club (1847) £14 10. 0.
 Two Ancola (?) vests 8/-, pinafore 3/3. Nortons for children's
 trousers £1 15 10. Twelve yards of calico 3/6, warming pan 10/-.
 Travelling Lecturer on Geology 1/-, Magic Lantern 3/6.
 Poor foreign boy 1/-, constant pennies to tramps. A poor cottager
 who was robbed by a Hopper 1/-. Barrow £1, ladder 13/-. Watch £1
 2. 0. Three chairs from Dult of Mailing 13/6. Frank for repeating the
 Creed 2/6. 8 Birch brooms 6d. Nursery Druggett 1/6.
 Hip bath for his children £ 1 3 0 . Tea service for his children 10/6.
 Carpet broom 3/- Each of his children receive 1/- as New Year's
 Gift. Little Franky for perfectly saying his alphabet 6d. Old Mrs.
 Chapman 2% d for snuff.

Extracts from the Diaries of the Rev. John Mickleburgh
 1847 - 1848 - 1849

SERVANTS' WAGES

		£	s	d
1847	Mary Jane Bartur per annum	9	10	0
	paid quarterly wage @	2	10	0
	Ann White - 1/ - per week			
1848	Mary Baldwin, from March 18 ^a - May 8 ^a		13	0

	(when she left)			
	Harriet Skinner (pro tem)		5	0
	returned & was paid the fol. April	1	10	0
1849	Catharine Norman, per annum	9	0	0
	arrived May 8 ^a , left June (paid)		16	0
	Charlotte Webb, per annum	8	0	0
	arrived Oct., left Nov. (paid)		13	6
	Margaret Allchin, arrived Nov 30 ^a			
	but left the following Jan. owing			
	to ill health (paid)		14	0

HOUSE-KEEPING EXPENSES

1 cwt. coal 1/6, 6 tons coal £1 16 0.

From May 1845 to Feb 1846 Bread & Meat bill £17 4 8. Seven months flour bill £9 5 0.

Butter for 3 weeks 2/6 @ 6d per lb.

One bushel of potatoes 5d. 11% lb. pork @ 7d per lb. 6/10%; leg of lamb 5/3.

Parcel of 240 (!) herrings from Walmer 4/6. Turkey 11/-, fowl 1/6, Goose 6/-, 3 lbs sausages 2/ 3 lbs coffee & 1 lb tea 10/- 4% lbs veal 3/- . Crumpets every Saturday 1/- . Gin 1 pint 1/10d. 2 pints Rum 5/4% d, % pint Beer 2d, Brandy \ pint 2/-, h oz quinine 6/-. Sedative powder 4d.

1/- in each of 5 cakes for poor widows, etc.**

**See Note 1 on page 29

THE FIRST EASTER at ST. MARY'S CHURCH PLATT

(from the Diaries of the Rev. John Mickleburgh, edited by the late
Rev. Canon R.V. Bristow)

Holy Week in 1846 was Spring-like in Platt, with warm sunny days which persisted, except for a thunder storm and deluge during the Saturday night. Platt, as a separate parish from Wrotham was still scarcely four months old, indeed, on February 8th the first vicar had "read himself into the Benefice of St. Mary's Church, with a Declaration of Assent after the Evening Service, a Memorandum signed by Captain Randolph of Gt. Comp, and Mr. Ben Watson the Church Wardens."

John Mickleburgh spent some time during Easter week drawing a large map of the new Parish to hang in the Church porch on Easter Day. There was a good congregation on Good Friday, including the vicar's wife and their five children, (after eating their hot-cross buns), but the afternoon attendance was very poor, perhaps due to a large party of men shooting rats in the vicinity. At the Sacrament, the first of the two Easter Day's services, the number of communicants was 24, and the collection amounted to £2 1 7^d, to add to which the vicar had received £1 the previous day, from a Mr. Norris of Wrotham Heath. At the afternoon service there was a good congregation, the service including the only sermon of the day, as well as the Baptism of four children.

In the past, John Mickleburgh's musical ear had been much offended by the congregational singing in Platt Church, (a choir had not yet been formed) so, on Easter Day, he repeated his Palm Sunday experiment of inviting a Mr. Ashdown, the village Blacksmith, to lead the congregation for a fee of 2/6. The map of the Parish was much looked at by the Easter congregation on leaving Church.

The very first Vestry Meeting was held on Easter Monday morning, when everything passed off pleasantly and unanimously. Captain Randolph and Mr. Ben Watson were elected Vicar's and People's Wardens respectively, and the Highway Rate and Poor Rate were assessed for the ensuing twelve months.

How very different was the atmosphere at the Wrotham Vestry Meeting, which John Mickleburgh (as a former curate of that

parish) attended in the afternoon. Much angry feeling and coarse language were expressed at the separation of Platt from Wrotham, and the meeting decided to adjourn for a fortnight, while the Church Commissioners were "memorialized" on the subject.

The new Vicar of Platt spent Wednesday evening dining with his Church Warden at Gt. Comp, possibly to talk over and compare notes of the very first Easter of the new Parish. The walk home to Borough Green afterwards, was the darkest he ever remembered - (the Pascal moon must have been late in rising that night) only to find his wife Fanny waiting up for him and feeling very poorly.

I wish to thank Mr. Stephen Webb for the opportunity to study his copies of Parish Magazines 1898 and 1899 from which the following information is taken. J.V.C.T.

NOTES 1898 - 1899

- A. In January - 1899 there is a letter from the Reverend George Billing in the St. Mary Platt Magazine (in the singular as it was then called), price one penny. He had succeeded the Reverend Francis Gregory who had died the previous year. The Church Wardens were Captain Weatherall of Gt. Comp and Mr. Frank West of Mill House now called Foxbury. Sidesmen were: C. Baker and R. C. Pearson (of Platt Post Office). In October of that year Capt. Weatherall left Gt.Comp and Mr. Cuthbert Lewis of Millwood Wrotham Heath succeeded him as Church Warden, subsequently becoming licensed Lay Reader
- B. Seats in North and South Transept were reserved by the Church Wardens for subscribers to the Church Fund. All seats in the Nave are free.

C. CHURCH EXPENSES

1898 A/C audited by R.C.Pearson & F Perkins

June 1899.	£	s	d
Visitation fee		10	0
Clerk & Sexton	14	14	10
Organ Blower	2	0	0
Fire Insurance	1	15	0
Surplices (washing?)	1	4	0
Coke	2	17	6
Repairs (no details given)	1	10	5
New Bell Rope		10	0
Cleaning Organ	7	10	0
Winding Clock	1	10	0
Service Register		3	0

SUNDAY SCHOOL

1899

10 AM and 2.30 PM

CATECHISING: 3 pm on 3rd Sundays

OCTOBER 1899 "All children who wish to join Sunday School, must do so without delay, otherwise they will not be entitled to the Christmas treat. Whenever there is no Sunday School, as in hopping and fruit picking seasons, 10 marks are given to every child who is at the school by 10.40 am and attends Service in the Church. Parents are earnestly invited to encourage their children to attend Sunday School regularly, both morning and afternoon, and to learn their Home Lesson "and not to lose their lesson paper". Smaller children met in the school and were taught by Miss Annie Perkins who later became step-mother to Mr. Fred Pierce and his brother James. The elder children were given instruction by the Vicar in the Church, accompanied by Miss Alice Perkins on the organ. Outings for elder children took place at a sea-side resort. Younger ones to Great Comp during Captain Weatherall's tenancy, or to Mr & Mrs Harrington of Windmill Hill.

A Prize giving was held in January 1899, amongst winners were F.H.C. & E. Hogben, F. & B. Broad, Mr L. Vidler, F. Fuller, P. Prentice, G. Bance. "Afterwards 83 children sat down to tea. The Perkins family presented bon-bons and Mrs Tudman of Offham sent apples. "The Vicar desires to thank Mrs. Hewson and Mr Carlow for loan of tea-urns, and Mr Pearson for lending large supplies of crockery."

THE MISSION ROOM WROTHAM HEATH

Church Services were also held in The Mission Room, which formerly stood on ground now occupied by two houses at the bottom of Windmill Hill. It was founded by the Miss Mansells of Nepicar Lodge, and Mrs Francis Charlewood Turner of Warren Wood, now the home of David Hyder. A Service of Song took place on Sunday evenings, often illustrated by magic lantern slides, with music provided by a harmonium. The gift of Mrs Charlewood Turner. Extra Services were held during Lent. Meetings of the Mother's Union, lectures, of which two are mentioned in 1898, one by G. Paris & F. Luxford on the Rearing of Poultry at 2d per lecture or 6d the full course. The other by Mr C. Lewis of Millwood on The Boer War then in progress, Boys Clubs, entertainments, and social activities, (see "Wrotham Heath" by Doris Hayes in Platt News of November 1979) Amongst other benefactors in Platt and Wrotham Heath, some of whose names are still remembered, were: Mr & Mrs Percy Minter of Staddleswood, Mrs Cadby of Ruffway, the West and Perkins families, Mr Gustave Lanser of Beechin Wood, the Misses Gregory, the Hon. Ralph Nevill, Capt. Weatherall of Gt. Comp, Sir H. Murray K.C.B., the Pascall brothers, Mrs TQdman, Dr & Mrs Lipscomb, Dr Charlewood Turner, Mr & Mrs R.C.Pearson of Platt Post Office, Mr & Mrs A.E.Collinge of Bracken Hill, Mr Carlow of Wrotham Heath Bakery, Miss du Bost of Huntsman's Lodge, formerly governess to the fated Czar's family and of course the Vicar and his family.

ST. MARY PLATT PARISH MAGAZINE

1899

DODGE'S CHARITY

"In the month of December 1885 the Church at St. Mary Platt was broken into, and the chest containing the Parish Registers, Book of Charities, and other papers were stolen. A book was found in the house of the person who was accused of committing the robbery, the leaves on which the Accounts were written, having been destroyed."

This information is given on the first page of a vellum bound account book for local charities, viz: Dr. Layfield and Edward Dodge.

On a tablet in the tower of Wrotham Church are these words: "EDWARD DODGE formerly of Lachlade (sic Lechlade) in the County of Gloucester deceased, did by his last Will and Testament bearing the date the 18th December 1597 (amongst other things) give as follows: 'Item, I give to the poor at Wrotham Five Pounds by the year to be taken out of my lands there' N.B. This rent charge is issued out of a certain farm and lands called Great Comp in the said Parish of Wrotham, belonging to Multon Lambarde Esq., and now in the occupation of Mr Charles Style.

(William Luck, Church Warden - July 1801)

In the Platt Parish Magazine of May 1899, the Vicar and Churchwardens in the administration of Dodge's Charity, invited the help of the two sidesmen, C.Baker & R.C.Pearson to administer the sum of £1 11 3, the share which fell to this Parish. The recipients at Easter of that year were: (widows) Bailey, Taylor, Buss, Martin, Usher, Higgins & Lever; (Messrs) William Bance, Alfred Ashby, James Evans, R & C Terry, G. Bromley, G. Brooker & Thomas Broad. All of whom received 2/- each, with the exception of widow Paine of the Common who only received 1/3.

According to the above-mentioned account book, the sum of £5 was paid out of % of the Comp Estate to the Minister and Church Wardens in the month of December 1887 and distributed in the following January to twelve families whose names were written upon one of the leaves destroyed. From the £5, Platt received £1.11.3, Wrotham received £1.14.4, Plaxtol received £1.14.5.

(The origin of the Rent Charge is set out in the printed report of The Commissioners for Inquiry concerning Charities 1818 - 1837.)

From Roderick Cameron of Great Comp.

A At Christmas 1835 Multon Lambarde caused two year's payment i.e. £10 of Dodge's Charity to be distributed indiscriminately amongst all the poor of the Parish of Wrotham, which at that time included Platt and Plaxtol. One thousand in number and the same mode of distribution had been adopted in former years. Two, three and four year's payments having been disposed of at one time; instead of distributing the sum of five pounds every year amongst the more industrious of the poor selected for that purpose.

B In a deed of 1718 Isaac Tomlyn of Nepicar leased Great Comp, and amongst other clauses Isaac Tomlyn "shall and will yearly and every year during the term of this demise bear, pay, and discharge one annuity or yearly rent charge of £5 of lawfull money called or known by the name of Dodge's Guift, yearly issuing and payable out of the said demisal promises to the said Parish of Wrotham" We like keeping this charity going, and still pay half of the £5 to the Vicar, having resisted a move to capitalise it.

THE ALMSHOUSES & BETENSON TRUST

"The Betenson Trust was established by Mistress Helen Betenson (1702-1788) the daughter of Sir Edward Betenson of Wrotham Place. She took an active interest in the welfare of those unable to care for themselves, and on her death left her fortune to many established charities for widows, orphans etc, together with a bequest sufficient to build and maintain in twelve Alms- houses, and to provide a weekly stipend for twelve aged or infirm persons, being poor, sober, orderly and industrious parishioners; inhabitants of the ancient Parish of Wrotham and members of the Church of England."(from a tablet in Wrotham Church)

The Parish of Wrotham being already divided into the three Parishes of Platt, Plaxtol and Wrotham, (which later included Borough Green) the Executors decreed that each Parish should have four Alms- houses. Those in Wrotham were built in 1806, Platt 1826 and Plaxtol in 1858, and described as "Four neat Almshouses". (those in Platt probably designed by Whichcord, architect of Platt Church ten years later) When built, these Almshouses were considered very desirable, each had two rooms, a small kitchen with a cold tap, an open fire range in the living-room, an outside lavatory, and a communal wash-house; with a small garden and shed. Each resident received 1/- per week, and appointment to an Almshouse was a reward for a virtuous and hardworking life. There was a small income for repairs, but insufficient for improvements.

In 1808 the Bequest was registered with the Charity Commission to ensure that the Trust should be properly managed for all time.

In 1911 the Almshouses were registered as a charity and from then on came under the jurisdiction of the Charity Commission who laid down rules for administration of the Trust. When Pensions were introduced, the residents who by that time were receiving 3/6 per week gave this up in order to pay the interest on a mortgage for improvements; and in 1959 the sculleries were enlarged to make kitchens. Electricity and W.C. were installed, and baths put in the kitchens with a water heater to serve sink and bath. In 1970 by a new agreement between the Charity Commission and D.H.S.S. large mortgages could be raised for modernisation and central heating. The

interest and up-keep being paid by "Maintenance Contributions" from the residents, who then claimed them from D.H.S.S. as Rent Allowance. The cost of heating could be raised as Heating Contributions. As a result, bathrooms and indoor W.C.s were installed, kitchens improved, and kitchens replaced by fire places. Hot water and central heating were installed, and the houses redecorated. Now-a-days only those Almshouses which have not been modernised are free, but residents do not pay rent; they contribute towards the upkeep of their homes with Maintenance Contributions, which are refunded by D.H.S.S., and like everyone else, they pay for their own heating.

Eight Trustees, including three Clergy and a Clerk administer the Trust under the discretion of the Charity Commission, and with the aid of the National Association of Almshouses, residents are still elected from the Ancient Parish of Wrotham.

In 1968 Platt Almshouses were re-named "The Captain's Walk" in memory of the late Captain Austin Charlewood Turner - Church Warden 1932 - 1962.

PLATTCHURCHFAIRS

1923 - 1933

Before our Church Fairs took place, fetes were held in the Curate's garden, now Ruffway, until recently the property of Mr & Mrs W.Addiscott.

1923: - In August 1923 the first Church Fair was held in a field, now the site of St.Mary's Close. A Committee under the Chairmanship of the Vicar, the Reverend J.N. Mallinson. A.C. Sutton, Hon. Secretary organised the programme, assisted by Captain & Mrs McDougall-Porter and Commander Maxwell. A bicycle, the gift of Mr H. Little of Hatcham's was raffled, and raised £35.12s. There were various exhibits and stalls, while the Bands of Wrotham, Borough Green and District Branches of the British Legion dispensed music.

Takings £211

1924: - In the same field, then called Church Meadow, from which not a modern building was to be seen, an Olde English Faire took place, opened by Lady Stopford. Helpers were dressed in costumes of the late 18th Century. Part of the meadow was roped off to resemble a Village Green - complete with stocks. Pupils of Miss Bright and Miss Shrubbs danced round the maypole. Organisers were Capt. McDougall-Porter and Commander Maxwell.

Takings £250

1925: - Another Olde English Faire, opened by the Mayor of Maidstone, Councillor H.G.Tywritt-Drake. Dogshow, Children's pets Competition etc. Treasurer Mr Denis Keane.

Takings £275

1926: - For the first time, the Church Fair was held in the Vicarage garden on June 11th, opened by Archdeacon Savill. A prominent figure was Capt. McDougall-Porter, dressed as Town Crier; who announced the events of the day, in the time-honoured fashion. The Vicar, the Reverend J.N.Mallinson (Chairman and acting Secretary) was assisted by Messers Percy Minter C.B.E., R.W. Pearson, D. Keane, and the Treasurer G. McDermott. Takings not recorded.

1927: - Fair opened by Mr Guy Ewing, the event was again announced by Captain McDougall-Porter, who dressed as Town Crier, had toured the surrounding villages with great success. Takings £232, from which £150 was distributed between local charities and balance towards organ repairs.

1928: - Visitors again summoned by the Town Crier, Captain McDougall-Porter, attired in red and black. The Vicar, the Reverend J.N. Mallinson in Georgian costume of blue velvet and white wig introduced Lady Lowther of Wrotham Heath House, who performed the opening ceremony. Welcome addition, a Punch and Judy Show. Music provided by Town Mailing Band.

Takings £236

1929: - Seventh Church Fair opened by Councillor and Mrs G.H.Tywritt-Drake, Mayor and Mayoress of Maidstone. 1250 persons attended.

Takings £268 6s.

1933: - The Reverend A.J.Cross, the new Vicar, introduced Mrs McDougall-Porter, who said that in eleven years Platt had raised approximately £1500.

Hon. Secretary, Mr. G.McDermott;

Hon. Treasurer Mr D. Keane and

Organisor Captain C.A.C.Turner.

N.B. No records for years 1930 - .31 or 32.